



PRESENTS

THE EXPLODING GIRL

OPENS IN NEW YORK AND SELECT CITIES – MARCH 12, 2010



Running Time: 80 minutes

Rating: Not Rated by the MPAA

World Premiere: Tribeca Film Festival - 2009

Awards: Best Actress, Narrative Feature Film – 2009 Tribeca Film Festival

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SYNOPSIS

In her first leading role, Zoe Kazan plays Ivy, a twenty-year-old college student home for Spring Break. She's excited about a developing romance back at school and life is seemingly perfect. When her longtime friend Al finds himself without a place to stay during the break, Ivy and her mother take him in and Al and Ivy's friendship strengthens while her boyfriend grows more and more distant. Increasingly distressed about her conflicting feelings, Ivy struggles to keep control, not wanting overwhelming her emotions and trigger her epilepsy. Restrained and meditative, THE EXPLODING GIRL is the exquisite portrait of a young girl coming of age and finding a deeper kind of love in New York City.

Interview with the Director

The film centers on the character of Ivy, a girl in her teens. Why did you want to tell her particular story and how do you relate to her?

I was inspired to tell Ivy's story because of her calm and selfless nature. Her character originated on a down day. As a way of protecting myself from looking at things negatively, I started to imagine someone who would motivate me to become a better person. Ivy can't do everything she wants because of a medical condition, but she never complains. When Ivy's character finally emerged, I was humbled by her resilience and I was eager to share her story.

Zoe Kazan (Ivy) and Mark Rendall (Al) have remarkable chemistry in the film: how did you cast them?

I met Zoe when she auditioned for another film I was working on. She brought in a hand-made sketchbook created by the character and this left a lasting impression on me. The day I first imagined Ivy's character, thought of Zoe. We met again and agreed to work together, even though there was no story or script. For the next couple of months we went on several walks. Zoe told me stories from her life and came up with Ivy's name and I compiled a couple hundred pages of notes and research. I was 60-pages into the original script when I felt something was wrong. I then remembered a guy I had met through another actress. I had only met Mark once, but I had heard many fond stories of him. I based Al on my impressions of Mark and imagined the film should be about their friendship. This new draft only took four days to write, because it was so easy to imagine Zoe and Mark together. Mark brought a lot of his own personal character to the story. He built a robot for fun, which we incorporated into the story. He also left the recording of a song he wrote on a mini-tape recorder which Zoe found in his suitcase while we were filming a scene. I knew the two of them would be very special together, but they hadn't met. We had Mark come down for an audition, but we mainly just played cards for the weekend.

The streets (and rooftops) of New York play important roles: what was the shooting like? How did you capture the light and atmosphere of the city in the summer?

While writing the film I wanted it to feel like we would be watching the characters from very far away. Most of the exteriors were filmed with a 300mm lens which meant the camera was set up about half-a-city-block away from action. In this way, the actors could walk down the street without having other pedestrians realize they were in the film. Using a small crew and a new digital 4k camera (red) we were able to capture moments in real locations with a documentary approach. We filmed subway shots by hiding the camera in a bag which Eric Lin, the DP, held on his lap. Eric and I had scouted and photographed every location at approximately the time of day we wanted to shoot. We tried to match the moods of the film accordingly with locations which were either very crowded or sparse.

You have been working a lot with the same crew – you've produced your wife's films for instance: is there something in common in the themes and way of working between all these films?

Thus far, So and I have made four films in four different countries: Iceland, Canada, Korea, and the USA. We've worked with crew sizes ranging from three people to fourteen. I think the approach we take to all of our films is very similar. We focus on moments of the everyday lives of each of our characters. This means we try to shoot on location and we hope for surprises and accidents. We also structure our films so that the order of events and the way the story is told is how we imagine the main character might remember these moments in their life. The title for "The Exploding Girl" actually comes from the B-side to the 12-inch single for The Cure's "In Between Days". So, my intention from the beginning of the project - even before the script - was to think of this film as a B-side to So's first film. The character's emotions reversed, but the feelings are similar. Loneliness healed by love is the common theme for all of our films. Our characters have a fragility which becomes mended through a relationship with someone who's always been close at hand, but never seen in the right way.

CAST BIOS

ZOE KAZAN – IVY

Newcomer Zoe Kazan received high praises for her breakout role as Maureen Grube in Sam Mendes' *Revolutionary Road* opposite Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet. An acclaimed theater actress and 2005 graduate of Yale University, Zoe made her New York stage debut in 2006 in the Off-Broadway revival of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* opposite Cynthia Nixon.

Kazan continued to shine on stage in 2007, starring in Jonathan Marc Sherman's *Things We Want*, directed by Ethan Hawke and Playwrights Horizons' production of *100 Saints You Should Know*, for which she received a Drama Desk Award nomination for Outstanding Featured Actress in a Play, as well as the Lucille Lortel Award nomination for Outstanding Featured Actress.

In January 2008, Kazan made her Broadway debut opposite S. Epatha Merkerson and Kevin Anderson in a revival of William Inge's *Come Back, Little Sheba*. The New York Times called her performance "first-rate," adding, "Ms. Kazan is terrific in conveying the character's self-consciousness." Following this role, Zoe was named the recipient of the 2008 Derwent Award, honoring "the most promising female and male performers on the New York metropolitan scene." Zoe is the only actor to be awarded the Derwent Award for three roles in one year: *Come Back, Little Sheba*, *100 Saints You Should Know* and *Things We Want*.

In the Fall of 2009, Zoe returned to Broadway in the New York adaptation of the critically acclaimed, London hit *The Seagull*.

She starred as Masha, opposite Kristin Scott Thomas and Peter Sarsgaard.

Zoe is also a talented playwright who's family drama, *Absalom*, was produced at the 2009 Humana Festival at the Actor's Theater of Louisville. A second play has been commissioned by Manhattan Theater Club.

As Zoe continues her success in the theatre, she is also making a splash on the big screen. In 2007 she was featured in Paul Haggis' thriller, *In the Valley of Elah* with Charlize Theron and Tommy Lee Jones and Gregory Hoblit's *Fracture* with Anthony Hopkins and Ryan Gosling. The following year she appeared in *August* with Josh Hartnett. Most recently Kazan appeared in Rebecca Miller's *The Private Lives of Pippa Lee* with an all star studded cast including Julianne Moore, Keanu Reeves and Blake Lively and *I Hate Valentine's Day* with Nia Vardalos and John Corbett.

Zoe recently wrapped picture on two new films: Josh Radnor's directorial debut, *HappyThankYouMorePlease*, with Radnor, Malin Akerman, Kate Mara, and Pablo Schreiber; and Kelly Reichardt's latest movie, *Meek's Cutoff*, which also stars Michelle Williams, Paul Dano, and Shirley Henderson.

Up next you can see Zoe in Richard Linklater's *Me and Orson Welles* with Claire Danes and Zac Efron; Bradley Rust Gray's *The Exploding Girl*, for which she was awarded Best Actress in a Narrative Feature Film by the Tribeca Film Festival; and Nancy Meyers' new film *It's Complicated* with Meryl Streep, Steve Martin and Alec Baldwin.

Zoe resides in New York City.

MARK RENDELL – AL

Rendall is an award winning young actor who has been on stage and screen since the age of ten. He has appeared in Don McKellar's *Childstar*, opposite Jennifer Jason Leigh and Eric Stoltz, *Spirit Bear* with Ed Begley Jr. and Graham Greene, NBC's mini-series *Revelations* opposite Bill Pullman and Natascha MacElhone, as well as François Girard's *Silk*. Rendall recently appeared in *My One And Only* with Renée Zellweger and Kevin Bacon and is starring in David Bezmozgis's *Victoria Day*.

CREW BIOS

BRADLEY RUST GRAY - DIRECTOR

Bradley Rust Gray produced So Yong Kim's *In Between Days* (2006) and *Treeless Mountain* (2009) and is producing her new film *For Ellen*. Gray's first narrative feature, *Salt* (2003), was filmed in Iceland and won the Caligari Film Prize for Innovative Filmmaking in Berlin. Gray's short film *Hitch* (2000) was selected as one of the "Best Films of the Year" in Film Comment Magazine. His second feature, *The Exploding Girl*, starring Zoe Kazan and Mark Rendall, had its world premiere at the 2009 Berlin Film Festival. The US Premiere was at the Tribeca Film Festival where Kazan took home the Best Actress Award. Gray is a Fulbright scholar who has received graduate degrees from both USC and the British Film Institute in London. His undergraduate work focused on architecture, sculpture, and experimental filmmaking, with a degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

SO YONG KIM – PRODUCER

So Yong Kim is the director of two feature films, *IN BETWEEN DAYS* and *TREELESS MOUNTAIN*. *TREELESS MOUNTAIN'S* script received support from the Cannes L'Atelier Program, the Sundance Institute's Writers and Directors Labs, and the Pusan Promotional Program.

IN BETWEEN DAYS was acclaimed by critics and won the Special Jury Prize at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival along with the International Critics' Prize at Berlin. It was also awarded an LA Critics Prize and Best Film and Best Actress Prizes at Buenos Aires. Kino International and the Sundance Channel released the film in North America, and With Cinema released the film in Korea.

So Yong Kim was born in Pusan, South Korea and immigrated to the US when she was twelve. She studied painting, performance, and video art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she earned her MFA. She has made several experimental short films including *A BUNNY RABBIT*, shot by renowned cinematographer Christopher Doyle. Kim also produced Bradley Rust Gray's award-winning Icelandic feature, *SALT*, in 2003. In 2006, Kim was featured as one of the "25 Filmmakers to Watch" in Filmmaker Magazine.

KARIN CHIN – PRODUCER

Karin Chien is an independent film producer based in New York City. Her films have won over 50 film festival awards, premiered at Sundance, been nominated for an Independent Spirit Award, and secured international distribution. Ms. Chien recently launched Generate Films, a new initiative to distribute independent Chinese films to the U.S. Ms. Chien is also curating the Chinatown Film Project, an inaugural exhibition for the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), featuring New York City's top filmmakers.

BEN HOWE - PRODUCER

Ben Howe is an independent producer based in New York City. In addition to Bradley Rust Gray's *The Exploding Girl*, previous production credits include So Yong Kim's *Treeless Mountain* (Toronto IFF 2008, Pusan IFF 2008, Berlin 2009) and Matt Wolf's *Wild Combination: A Portrait of Arthur Russell* (Berlin 2008). Ben also recently co-produced Cruz Angeles' *Don't Let Me Drown* (Sundance 2009), and produced David Barker's *Daylight*, currently in post-production.

CREDIT LIST

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